

Message Text

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43

ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 CIAE-00

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O 141820Z JAN 74

FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4176

C O N F I D E N T I A L TUNIS 0225

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, TS

SUBJECT: TUNISIAN-LIBYAN UNITY: IMPLICATIONS FOR USG;
PUBLIC POSTURE

REF: TUNIS 204, TUNIS 206.

1. AS REPORTED REFTELS, PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA HAS ASSURED ME THAT TUNISIAN-LIBYAN UNITY IS CONSISTENT WITH U.S. INTERESTS. WE HAVE ALSO INDICATED THAT IF WE ARE CORRECT IN BELIEVING THAT POLITICAL UNITY IS UNLIKELY IN FORE-SEEABLE FUTURE, SHORT-RUN U.S. INTERESTS IN TUNISIA WILL BE PRESERVED AND THAT FOR TIME BEING WE SHOULD SIT TIGHT AND INITIATE NO CHANGE IN OUR POLICIES TOWARD AND PROGRAMS IN TUNISIA (TUNIS 204).

2. IN FURTHERANCE THESE THOUGHTS, WE BELIEVE THAT ANY USG ACTION THAT SEEKS TO PENALIZE TUNISIANS WOULD RUN COUNTER TO U.S. INTERESTS. IF UNITY SCHEME COLLAPSES ON ITS OWN, ANYTHING THAT WEAKENS TUNISIA AT THIS JUNCTURE WOULD ONLY RISK STRENGTHENING HAND OF LIBYANS AND LIBYAN SUPPORTERS.

3. WE ANTICIPATE SERIES OF QUESTIONS FROM OTHER EMBASSIES, PRESS AND BUSINESS PERSONNEL CONCERNING
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(A) ATTITUDE USG AND (B) RESULTS MY CONVERSATION WITH

PRESIDENT. WE SUGGEST THAT OUR PUBLIC POSITION SHOULD BE THAT UNITY PROPOSAL IS MATTER BETWEEN TUNISIANS AND LIBYANS AND USG CONTEMPLATES NO CHANGES IN ITS RELATIONSHIPS WITH TUNISIA. I DO NOT PROPOSE TO ANSWER PRESS INQUIRIES BY DIVULGING DETAILS MY MEETING WITH PRESIDENT OTHER THAN TO SAY THAT WE DISCUSSED MATTERS OF MUTUAL CONCERN INCLUDING RECENT DEVELOPMENTS (BELIEVE BOURGUIBA'S REASSURANCES SHOULD COME FROM GOT SHOULD GOT CHOOSE REVEAL THEM). I WILL, OF COURSE, INFORM SOME OF MY DIPLOMATIC COLLEAGUES (WHEN ASKED) OF BOURGUIBA'S ASSURANCES AND WILL PASS ON SAME WORD TO BONA FIDE AMERICAN BUSINESSMEN ON FYI BASIS. SHOULD DEPARTMENT PREFER DIFFERENT PROCEDURE, I WILL NEED TT KNOW BY OPENING OF BUSINESS TOMORROW MORNING.
SEELYE

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